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CIA/CI TURNER, Adm.

# Verification

"No matter what happens to the specific intelligence sources in Iran," President Carter said last January, "we can adequately compensate for their change." Yet CIA Director Stansfield Turner told Congress last week it will take five years for the United States to replace the intelligence capability lost with the closing of monitoring stations in Iran only 600 miles from Soviet testing sites. The contrast between these two statements tells why the administration, through its lack of candor, has dug itself into a huge crater on the question of verifying Soviet compliance with a second strategic arms limitation treaty (SALT II).

How much better it would have been had Mr. Carter and his spokesmen acknowledged flat-out that, yes, the loss of the Iranian bases is a serious one and that, yes, this loss is bound to hurt U.S. intelligence-gathering operations. Then the argument could have been made that since Soviet testing of nuclear weaponry is going to continue in any event, a new treaty would at least put some constraints on Moscow. The Kremlin can never be sure how much it really knows about all the different U.S. means of intelligence-gathering, including precision photo reconnaissance from space satellites.

Instead, the administration has tried to bluff, first by downgrading the importance of the lost Iranian bases, then by pretending that monitoring stations in Turkey could take up the intelligence slack and now by suggesting that U-2 aircraft flying near the southwest-

ern Soviet border could be a replacement. No wonder that such key senators as Henry Jackson, John Glenn and Howard Baker will have none of it. Admiral Turner's own statements acknowledge the importance of the lost Iranian bases. Turkey's stations lack line-of-sight monitoring capability, even if Anakara authorities permit them to remain. As for U-2's, over which countries will they be permitted to fly? The better answer, though it will take Admiral Turner's five years, is more accurate surveillance from space.

Although the verification question may be crucial during the Senate ratification debate on SALT II, it would be unfortunate if administration gaffes magnify it beyond recognition. The key question in arms control must surely be whether the United States will be more secure with or without a new treaty. This newspaper is disposed to favor a treaty because we believe it adds to U.S. security, not because we are convinced the Russians can be made to comply with its every provision.

Would American land-based missiles be less vulnerable to a Soviet first strike in the absence of a treaty? Would the United States be more secure if both superpowers accelerated rather than limited their nuclear arms race? We doubt it, and therefore consider SALT II an important step toward nuclear restraint. Unfortunately, the treaty will never be achieved if the administration deals in intellectual sleight-of-hand when situations like Iran raise awkward side issues.